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Review

R21 Revolution: Advancing the Frontiers of Malaria Vaccination

Nithya Sri Pandi[1]*, Sermugapandian Nithya[2], Yoghashri D [3], Hema D[3], Pooja S[3], Sathish Kumar JD[3], Kannan Jakkan[4]

[1]Doctor Of Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Research Labaratory, Cherraan's College Of Pharmacy, Coimbatore, India.
[2]Professor, Department Of Pharmacology, Sri Ramachandra Faculty Of Pharmacy, Sri Ramachandra Institute Of Higher Education And Research (SRIHER) (Du), Porur, Chennai, India.
[3]Bachelor Of Pharmacy, Sri Ramachandra Institute Of Higher Education And Research, (SRIHER) (Du), Porur, Chennai, India.
[4]Senior Director, Quality Control At Novitium Pharma LLC, New Jersey, USA.

*Author for Correspondence: Nithya Sri Pandi
Email: nithyasripandi2005@gmail.com

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Abstract

Malaria continues to pose a huge global public health challenge mostly affecting sub-Saharan Africa with high morbidity and mortality among children. Recent progress in malaria vaccine development has included the idea of addressing various points in the parasite's lifecycle. This review discusses the creation and effectiveness of numerous vaccine technologies, with an emphasis on the new R21 candidate. R21, a pre-erythrocytic vaccine, is designed as a chimeric shaped protein that links BSP's NANP recycle and hepatitis an island teaching antiquity with an ozone formation of virus-like particles. From Phase I to Phase III clinical trials efficacy results, the highest reach 30/70 to 80% in various endemic population hold the hope. Improved adjuvants like Matrix-M provide miuch better immunogenicity through, givesout enhanced antibody and T-cell response condo maintaing a good safety record. in comparision to growth and development in RTS, S advanced in its rival R21 with higher antigen density and strengthend immune reaction. In addition there are irrigating templating multi(implpament resin Composition vivo strategistlist separate importantly in indication against the vaccination vaccineone unwanted multi component vaccination strawberries, accoompwdental aspect separat antmalShearl Drugs represent the theo,L896 due to sindemitology recent specific question autour oriented cohesively vaccines upon single stage vaccine. R21 figures markedly on how much all global malaria elimination efforts can benefit.

Keywords: R21 Malaria Vaccine, Matrix-M Adjuvant, Plasmodium falciparum, Pre-erythrocytic Immunization, Vaccine Efficacy Trials, Malaria Elimination Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Malaria is a condition that produces chills, muscle ache, and a high temperature. It can be contracted from a mosquito bite. In the United States, malaria is quite uncommon. Africa, Southern Asia, Central America, and South America are where it is most frequently found [1]. Malaria kills about 2000 children per day, with sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) accounting for 90% of the deaths [2]. Five distinct Plasmodium species P. falciparum, P. vivax, P. ovale, P. malariae, and the most recently discovered P knowlesi cause malaria in humans. Plasmodium is an obligatory intracellular parasite that needs two hosts to complete its life cycle: a human host for the asexual life cycle and an arthropod vector for the sexual life cycle. Malaria's occurrence has significantly decreased in recent years, increasing the likelihood that it could eventually be eradicated. Although there are a few effective medications for treating malaria, such as sulphadoxine, chloroquine, and its derivatives, the condition is curable [3]. Through the production of antibodies against the circumsporozoite protein's (CSP) core repeat (Asn-Ala-Asn-Pro [NANP]), the top malaria vaccine candidate, RTS, S/AS01, achieves partial effectiveness. A phase 3 trial of 15,460 babies and children in seven sub-Saharan African nations was conducted between 2009 and 2013 to evaluate efficacy.2, 3 With a median follow-up of 48 months, the overall vaccine effectiveness for children aged 5–17 months was 36% for those who received RTS,S/AS01 at months 0, 1, 2, and 20 and 28% for those who received the vaccine at months 0, 1, and 2[4]. Finding and creating better vaccine candidates that could meet the WHO target of 75% effectiveness against clinical malaria by 2030 is still urgently needed[5].A new pre-erythrocytic malaria vaccination candidate is called R21. Both R21 and RTS, S contain core repetitions of the CSP and HBsAg attached to the C-terminus, which self-assemble into virus-like particles in yeast. The extra HBsAg seen in RTS, S is absent in R21. Unlike RTS,S, which has 20% fusion protein moieties and 80% HBsAg monomers expressed alone, R21 solely has fusion protein moieties, which probably reduces the CSP coverage of the virus-like particle surface[6,7] .

Causes of malaria

A parasite is the cause of malaria. The mosquito species that spreads malaria from person to person is the Anopheles mosquito [8].The parasite enters a person's bloodstream by a mosquito bite Trusted Source. It travels to the liver, where it multiplies [9].The "R21/MatrixM malaria vaccine" is a novel vaccination that has shown excellent safety and effectiveness. With an efficacy rate of 70–80%, the new vaccination has been determined to be more successful than its predecessor after a big phase III experiment. The Ghana Food and Drugs Authority approved the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine in 2023, making Ghana the first nation to do so. Children between the ages of 5 and 36 months are the ones most at risk of contracting and dying from malaria; thus, they are the target audience for the vaccine [10]. R21 is a virus-like particle composed of the central repetitions of Asn-Ala-Asn-Pro (NANP) and the C-terminal sequence of the circumsporozoite protein connected to the hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg). R21 differs from RTS,S in that all of the HBsAg molecules are fused to the C-terminus of the circumsporozoite protein and NANP repeat, as opposed to 20% (see appendix p 12). R21 is administered with a saponin adjuvant known as Matrix-M at a low dosage of 5 μg to improve long-lasting antibodies to the core NANP repeat sequence of the circumsporozoite protein antigen [11].

Types of vaccines

Pre-erythrocytic vaccines

Antigens from the liver and sporozoite stages of Plasmodium, which infect humans after infecting mosquitoes, are the target of pre-erythrocytic vaccines (PEV). PEVs incite antibodies against surface antigens that eliminate sporozoites from the skin or bloodstream, or T cell responses that target infected hepatocytes. The protective effectiveness of radiation-attenuated WSV was initially demonstrated in the 1970s using hundreds of mosquito bites. High-activity PEVs have the potential to completely eliminate pre-erythrocytic parasites before they are discharged into the blood. Malaria vaccine studies have stayed steady at 10 per year for the past 20 years, but the emphasis has changed to entire sporozoite and transmission-blocking vaccinations. Because of resource limitations, P.vivax immunization experiments have been infrequently[12]. Humans can contract Plasmodium parasites by being injected with sporozoites by Anopheles mosquitoes. After invading hepatocytes, these sporozoites burst, releasing merozoites that then infiltrate erythrocytes. These stages are the focus of preerythrocytic, blood-stage, and transmission-blocking malaria vaccines. Pre-erythrocytic vaccinations prevent malaria by blocking its life cycle. RTS, S adjuvanted with AS01, a saponin-based adjuvant, was the first malaria vaccine authorized by the WHO. CSP combined with hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) and VLPs makes up RTS, S. By the end of four years, its modest efficacy against malaria sickness had decreased to 36% from 56% after one year. Before the vaccine was considered for prequalification, more research was sought, including a pilot study in Malawi, Ghana, and Kenya.[13].

Blood-stage vaccine

Malaria control strategies have shifted from control to eradication or elimination, but tools used are vulnerable to resistance and may not be sustainable in resource-constrained settings or areas with political instability. A highly effective vaccine is needed to eliminate malaria from high transmission areas. Protection against blood stages is crucial for an effective immune response and a highly effective malaria vaccine[14]. The malaria-vaccine group had a higher cumulative incidence of primary end point than the control group, with 17.4% efficacy against the primary end point. Efficacy against clinical malaria caused by AMA1 parasites was 64.3%, with local reactions and fever more frequent after vaccination[15].

Transmission-blocking vaccine

The respiratory tract is a major entry point for various pathogens, including influenza, 88coronavirus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and parainfluenza virus (PIV). These infections can cause mild upper respiratory infections, cold-like symptoms, bronchitis, 444pneumonia, and even death. With limited prevention or therapy, they are highly contagious to young children, the elderly, and immunocompromised patients, leading to hospitalization and mortality. Seasonal influenza epidemics can cause substantial mortality[16]. The respiratory tract is a major entry point for various pathogens, including influenza, coronavirus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and parainfluenza virus (PIV). All of malaria's clinical symptoms are caused by the blood stage of the parasite's life cycle. Plasmodium merozoites enter host red blood cells (RBCs) and multiply there throughout the blood stage. In this article, we examine the advancements, difficulties, and novel approaches in the creation of blood-stage malaria vaccines. We go over our current knowledge of immune responses to blood stages and the state of clinical development for different vaccine candidates against blood-stage malaria[17].

Multi-stage/multi-antigen vaccines

A vaccine that tackles all stages of a parasite's life cycle in a single construct, known as a multistage vaccine, might be less expensive than a vaccination strategy that combines several singlestage vaccinations. Additionally, this method can be more practical for the users of the immunizations than providing several shots at the same time. Regretfully, the creation of such a multi-stage malaria vaccine has not yet been very successful. Investigation on possible multistage malaria vaccines has revealed low efficacies and generally not enough antibody reactions[18].A P. vivax multistage m8Δ/AAV vaccine was developed, incorporating Pvcsp and Pvs25 genes. The vaccine demonstrated 100% protection against PvCSP-transgenic P. berghei sporozoites and up to 95% efficacy in preventing malaria transmission. The vaccine platform offers adaptability and superior qualities for managing malaria caused by P. falciparum and P. vivax. The m8Δ/AAV P. vivax multistage vaccine is expected to contribute significantly to malaria vaccine technology[19].

Trials involving r21 vaccine

Phase I Trial: Evaluate the Safety and Immunogenicity of the Vaccine.

Research into the vaccine's effectiveness resulted in the completion of two Phase 1 studies to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of R21 in healthy adult vaccinated individuals in malaria-endemic areas and those without previous exposure to malaria.It is carried out in the UN and Burkina Faso sites[20]. The first two Phase I human studies in the United Kingdom and Burkina Faso revealed that it was well tolerated, safe, and immunogenic RTS,S/AS01B [21]. Research carried out on different age groups revealed that R21 / MATRIX-M is immunebased and safe for adults, children, children, and newborns, and supports high antibody antibody levels after a recall dosage[22].

Phase 2: A validation to protect vulnerable populations

It had 77% efficacy in children aged 5-17 months at a 12-month follow-up study in Burkina Faso[23]. It was 78% in the second year of observation after a 12-month booster dose, high efficacy against recurrent malaria cases[24]. The phase 2 trials of the R21 malaria vaccine were successful. Furthermore, the vaccine had a good safety profile and was widely accepted[25].Antibody responses positively correlated with protection against malaria in the first and second years of follow-up[26]. These results cannot be compared directly with those of past vaccine trials since the study designs vary and geography is different [27].Studies with more extended time durations are lined up to monitor the long-term efficacy and relevance of booster injections in addition[28].

Phase 3: Efficacy and safety assessment in varying settings:

From the outcomes of Phase 2b results, a Phase 3 study was conducted involving around 4,800 children aged 5 to 36 months at different sites in four African countries.

The results indicated 75% efficacy in the seasonal areas, while 68% efficacy in typical areas and the vaccine seemed to be very effective and safe. The efficacy of the vaccine would help prevent a high rate of malaria incidences in the endemic areas[29].

Clinical research findings show that the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine is extremely safe and effective for both adults and children [30]. This makes the R21 vaccine a highly promising candidate for malaria treatment and prevention due to its excellent efficacy, safety, and costeffectiveness [31]. Since Serum Institute of India has

agreed to manufacture 200 million doses of the vaccine every year, R21 vaccine could be of paramount importance to global malaria elimination efforts[32,33].

Malarial Vaccine R21 efficacy

The R21 vaccine is one of the vaccine which is used to treat the vector borne disease malaria mainly the plasmodium falciparum so scientist decided to creat a vaccine based on the mechanism of action by which they bought many new vaccine but the R21 and RTS s are the only vaccine which is bought in the use of commercially others are still in the clinical trial stage the RTS is the first vaccine and the R21 is the second vaccine works on the pre erythrocytes stage based on the several factors like cost, illness Patient'S age, sex, and other medical medications the vaccines are suggested. in R21 the vaccine is given with various anti bioticS to enhance their efficacy based on this the efficacy is described below.

The effectiveness of the malaria vaccine varied a lot depending on how common malaria was in the area. (p=0.001) At low levels of malaria (PrP2–10 10%), the vaccine was 60% effective (95% CI 54 to 67). At moderate levels (PrP2–10 20%), it was 41% effective (21 to 57), and at high levels (PrP2–10 70%), it was only 4% effective (-10 to 22). (p<0.0001) The vaccine's effectiveness also changed depending on what was added to it. For example, at low levels of malaria (PrP2–10 10%), the vaccine was 60% effective (95% CI 54 to 67) for AS01, but only 47% effective (14 to 75) for AS02. (p=0.038) The age of the person who got vaccinated didn't seem to have a big effect on the vaccine's effectiveness. (p=0.038) Bednet use and sex didn't seem to be important either. (p=0.038) But here's the interesting part: the vaccine's effectiveness changed a lot over time. (p<0.0001) When the person got vaccinated, the vaccine was 36% effective (95% CI 24 to 45). But after 3 years, it had dropped to 0% effective (-38 to 38). (p<0.0001)

According to the World Health Organisation guidelines, the effectiveness of malaria vaccines in real-world settings is measured by how long it takes for someone to get sick after getting vaccinated. (99) By this measure, the RTS, S vaccine is showing 30%–50% effectiveness, as we found earlier. [34]

Efficacy was further assessed at 12 months (range 329–369 days) after the third vaccination. 195 participants had clinical malaria an increase of nine participants from the primary 6month analysis (the period of low malaria transmission). These cases occurred in 50 (34%) of 146 participants in group 1, 39 (27%) of 146 participants in group 2, and 106 (72%) of 147 participants in group 3. Cox regression showed vaccine efficacy of 71% (95% CI 59–79; p<0·0001) for group 1, and 77% (67–84; p<0·0001) for group 2. No significant difference in disease incidence was found between groups 1 and 2 at either 6 months or 12 months. Calculation of the numbers of cases that would be averted by the vaccination regimens, based on numbers of all malaria episodes and case incidence rates over 12 months, indicated a rate reduction of 1393 cases (95% CI 1043–1744) per 1000 children-years in group 1, and 1523 cases (1172–1875) per 1000 children-years in group 2.[35]

224 participants had a first episode of clinical malaria by 12 months according to the secondary case definition, including clinical cases with parasitemia of more than 0 parasites per μL. A Cox regression model comparing group 1 with group 3 showed vaccine efficacy of 70% (95% CI 60–78; p<0·0001), and 80% (72–86; p<0·0001) when comparing group 2 with group 3 [36]

Researchers looked at the effectiveness of the vaccine again, using a different way to define cases. They did this between 14 days after the third shot and 6 months or 12 months later. They also took into account things like sex, age when they got the vaccine, and whether they used bed nets. They used a special statistical method called a Cox regression model to compare the groups. They found that the vaccine was 75% effective at preventing malaria when compared to the group that didn't get the vaccine. They also found that the vaccine was 77% effective at preventing malaria when compared to the group that got the vaccine at 12 months. Even after adjusting for the use of seasonal malaria chemo prevention, the vaccine's effectiveness remained the same. After 6 months and 12 months of follow-up, researchers looked at blood samples from the participants. They found that at 6 months, 19% of the people in group 3 had malaria parasites in their blood, even though they didn't have any symptoms. This was lower than in groups 1 and 2, where 9% and 9% of the participants had malaria parasites in their blood, respectively. At 12 months, the number of people with malaria parasites in their blood had decreased to 4% of the people in group 3, 2% of the people in group 1, and 1% of the people in group 2. [37]

This study aimed to improve the leading malaria vaccine RTS, S by expressing a single CSPHBsAg fusion protein (R21) in yeast *Pichia pastoris*. Unlike RTS,S, which requires coexpression and purification of RTS and HBsAg in a 1:4 ratio, R21 forms particles alone. This novel finding suggests a potential improvement as it increases the proportion of CSP in the particle, potentially enhancing the immune response towards the malaria antigen. Since RTS,S efficacy is associated with the magnitude of the antibody response to the central conserved NANP repeat epitope, an increased anti-CSP response could lead to enhanced efficacy.

R21 is similar in size to both HBsAg and RTS, S particle and the accessibility of CSP antigen and relative inaccessibility of HBsAg on the surface of the particle was demonstrated by ELISA. This indicates, as predicted due to the orientation of the HBsAg in the particle lipid layer, that the majority of the R21 surface is covered in CSP antigen. The enhanced level of CSP antigen on the surface of R21 may result in greater CSP humoral responses not only because of the greater amount of malaria antigen available but also because it may mimic the

high level of epitope density present on the surface of many pathogens. This repetitive display of NANP may enhance the recognition of antigen by B cell receptors (BCRs) and improve BCR cross-linking, thereby enhancing B cell activation and antibody production. The epitope coverage of the surface of R21 has not been established here, but immunisation with R21 induced only very minimal antibodies to the HBsAg portion of the fusion protein, suggesting that the HBsAg is not accessible to BCRs on the particle surface.

R21 when administered at a very low dose of 0.5 μg in a range of safe, well tolerated adjuvants is able to induce very high levels of anti-CSP antibodies to the NANP repeat and good levels of T cells in BALB/c mice. Superior antibody titres were achieved with both saponin-based ISCOMs and squalene-based oil-in-water emulsions. T cell induction was also enhanced by adjuvant, but levels were significantly higher after administration of R21 with saponin-based ISCOMS. Formulating viral vectors with adjuvant was found to enhance the antibodies induced to the viral vector transgene product and this result has since been demonstrated in another study using viral vector vaccines for Rift Valley fever48. Enhanced induction of TRAP-specific antibodies could potentially be beneficial if they are able to bind to sporozoites and inhibit hepatocyte invasion, though this has been seen in some *in vitro* studies but not *in vivo.* Levels of TRAP specific antibodies have been shown to correlate with protection in naturally exposed individuals, but this may simply be a marker of exposure, not protective immunity. It has also been suggested that antibodies to three pre-erythrocytic antigens, TRAP, CSP and LSA1 (liver stage antigen 1) were more protective than antibodies to a single antigen. So it is possible that TRAP antibodies induced here could contribute to protection in a multi-component vaccine, if not protective on their own.

R21 with Matrix-M offers almost complete sterility, surpassing R21 with MF59, yet NANPspecific IgG titers remain similar. This suggests protective efficacy isn't solely determined by CSP-specific antibody titers. The difference may stem from inducing distinct antibodies or higher avidity for CSP antigen 56 or a different NANP-specific IgG isotype. Further studies should investigate IgG functional activity, such as complement activity, inhibition of motility, invasion, or liver-stage parasite development. CSP-specific T cell levels before challenge may also influence efficacy, as R21+ Matrix-M induced cellular responses more effectively. These findings emphasize the importance of adjuvant selection in vaccine development.

An effective malaria vaccine requires induction of both cellular and humoral immune responses to multiple antigens from multiple stages of infection. We aimed to determine if the R21 adjuvant vaccine can be used in a multi-component vaccination strategy with TRAP-based viral vectors. However, immune interference can occur when combining vaccines, as seen in studies combining RTS,S with protein in adjuvant vaccines or viral vectors with different antigenic inserts. Combining multiple antigens using different vaccination technologies that primarily activate different immune response arms might be more successful. This was demonstrated in pre-clinical studies combining CSP-based FP9 and MVA viral vectors with a CSP-based hepatitis B core particle vaccine and more recently with RTS,S/AS01 and ME-TRAP vectors. Mixing and co-administering R21+ adjuvant and the ChAd63-MVA ME-TRAP viral vector regimen didn't interfere with immune response induction. Mixing and co-administering R21+ MF59 with PbTRAP-based viral vectors enhanced efficacy. This supports the hypothesis that targeting both sporozoites and liver stage parasites with cellular and humoral responses, utilizing two different antigens, may overcome any leakiness of a sporozoite vaccine.

This study describes a CSP-based particle vaccine that uses HBsAg as a carrier matrix for the malaria antigen but doesn't induce HBsAg antibodies. This may benefit malaria immunization in people with pre-existing HBsAg antibodies or infants with the EPI schedule. We also demonstrate a multi-component vaccination strategy for inducing humoral and cellular immunity using viral vector vaccines with R21 particles in adjuvant. This strategy could induce immunogenicity against multiple antigens and stages of malaria and may be applied to other diseases requiring T cells and antibodies. R21, recently manufactured to GMP standard, is currently tested in three phase 1 clinical trials in the UK and West Africa and will be assessed for efficacy in a CHMI study. [38]

A special type of Research las carried on based on the increase in the Research by which changing The formulation of the R21 vaccine by giving in the emulsion based and liposomal based formulation In a mouse challenge model, we've characterized the efficacy and mechanism of action of four adjuvants from the Vaccine Formulation Institute: two liposomal (LQ and LMQ) and two squalene emulsion-based adjuvants (SQ and SMQ). These adjuvants contain QS-21 saponin (Q) and optionally a synthetic TLR4 agonist (M). Two R21 vaccine formulations, R21/LMQ and R21/SQ, provide the highest protection (81%–100%), but they elicit distinct innate sensing mechanisms in macrophages. LMQ activates the NLRP3 inflammasome, while SQ does not.

Remarkably, R21 with either SQ or LMQ achieved 81%–100% sterile protection, while SMQ and LQ offered respectively 63% and 44% efficacy. Clinical trials of R21 with Matrix-M adjuvant indicate that IgG titers against the NANP repeat sequence in R21 correlate with protection. Increased IgG, IgM, and IgA titers were induced by the adjuvants. Notably, the peak titers were comparable across the four adjuvanted formulations ,demonstrating that quantification alone of antibody responses could not distinguish between vaccine formulations with different efficacy. Batch analysis of protected vs. unprotected mice across all groups, however, revealed a significant correlation between the highest anti-NANP IgG titers and protection, in line with clinical trial data.

Our results indicate that the early fast and strong R21/LMQ-induced TH1-type innate cytokine profile mirrors a faster hum-oral response in comparison with R21/SQ. In this setting, LMQ promotes switching to TH1-type IgG profile dominated by IgG2 and IgG3, whereas SQ induces a TH2-type skewed IgG1 response. In the context of LMQ, NLRP3 synergises with TLR4 activation in eliciting early innate immunity and in shaping the CD4+ T helper response. *In vivo*, NLRP3 deficiency can be overcome and compensated for systemically to allow the generation of a protective B cell response [39]

A Research has done based on the preparation for mass vaccinations with the R21/Matrix-M™ combination and simultaneous administration of some anti malarial drugs like dihydroartemisinin, piperaquine, and a single low dose of primaquine, they conducted a study to evaluate the tolerability, safety, and potential interactions of this combination on immunogenicity and pharmacokinetics. A total of 120 healthy Thai volunteers were randomly assigned to receive either the combination of antimalarials and vaccinations (n = 50), vaccinations alone (n = 50), or antimalarials only (n = 20). And they concluded that the combination of those drugs doesn't affect the human body and didn't produce any pharmacological adverse effects and safer to use. [40]

Like the concept of malaria vaccine many more vaccines used for diseases like Covid-19 chicken pox, small pox, are invented in the basis of the critical World cruces and evolved using based on their actions. Though these drugs are genetically modified drugs which is used for causing the diseases. There are some disease like cancer which the the patient can get an harmful treatment but cannot be prevented before it affects the body.

CONCLUSION

As we got some of the researchers ideas and their innovations of the vaccine for the malaria is mainly works on the mechanism of the pre erythrocytic action and it is accepted around the world but the vaccine Which is working based on other mechanisms but they are in the clinical trial stage.

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